

## **Independent Review Summary Enterprise Project Management Office (EPMO)**

An Independent Review is defined in Statute, Title 3, Chapter 45, 3 VSA Para 2222, section 10G. In this Statute:

- any IT project over \$500K is required to have an Independent Review;
- it is the responsibility of the CIO's office to conduct this process, totally independent from the sponsor of the project; and,
- the CIO's office hires an outside consultant to do this work and bills the cost back to the sponsor of the project.

The EPMO Contracts & Procurement Specialist handles Independent Reviews for the CIO's office. The Independent Review process gets kicked off by an email to the EPMO with the project name, sponsor name, contact information, and a request for us to start the Independent Review process for your project. If the Enterprise Project Management Office has already been involved with your project and/or proposal effort, we will know when to start the Independent Review.

The Review project generally happens between the notification of award to a vendor and the contract signature. Basically, the Secretary of Administration will not sign off on a large IT contract unless the CIO approves. The basic purpose of the Independent Review process is to provide information to the CIO on whether or not he/she should approve the contract and whether it is in the best interests of the State for the project.

The selection of a winning vendor is necessary because part of the Independent Review process is for the Reviewer to interview both the agency/dept staff involved with the project as well as the selected vendor's staff even though no contract has been signed. The Independent Review deliverable is for the consultant to prepare a report for the CIO that assesses project risk and cost/benefit, and proposes any considerations the CIO should stipulate for the award, or recommendations for denying the award, of the contact.

The usual Review project task list includes:

- Selection of consultant or reviewer
- Project kickoff meeting with EPMO Contract & Procurement Specialist, sponsor and consultant
- Some ramp up time for the consultant to read project background
- Interview face-to-face time with staff, ask questions, etc
- Interview, either face to face or via phone, of the selected project vendor
- Our consultant writes the Review document
- Presentation of a Draft to the CIO
- Any final changes
- Final document and summary point follow up

- Assistance to you with contract negotiations (if the recommendation is to proceed with approval of the contract)
- Contract & Procurement Specialist Closure of review and filing

Usually an Independent Review costs under \$15K, and can be as little as \$9K if the project is very straightforward. When you notify the EPMO that a vendor has been selected, the EPMO Contracts & Procurement Specialist writes a Simple Bid RFQ for the Independent Review project, sends it to a list of consultants we have used to do Independent Reviews, gets the quotes back, a consultant is selected to perform the Review, and the Review project starts.

In the past, Independent Reviews were expensive and took a few months. Recently, the EPMO has led 2 Independent Reviews, both have cost less than about \$12K, and ran about 3 weeks start to finish. You need to supply the EPMO with the project specific background (see attached sample RFQ), we write the RFQ, give vendors about a week to reply, and then a couple weeks to do the work.

*All this said, an important note:* If you have a large or complex project, or something else comes up, we urge you to plan for about \$30K in cost and probably 3 months in time. This upper cost and timeframe sets an expectation for what we think is the "worst case" and, obviously, we try our best to come in way under that in time and cost. But we really don't know what happens until we talk with you about the specifics, and until the bids come back to my RFQ.